

Senate Bill 189  
January 29, 2015  
Presented by Ken McDonald  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, I am Ken McDonald, Wildlife Division Administrator for the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I am here today on behalf of the Director in support of Senate Bill 189.

Senate Bill 189 provides greater clarification that wolf license funds may be used for all aspects of wolf management as defined in 87-~~1-625~~, including public education about wolves, and makes this statute consistent with existing language in 87-1-625, MCA that requires the department allocate \$900,000 for *wolf management*, also as defined in 87-5-102. For context, wolf license revenue amounts to about \$450,000/year. Having the language consistent between the two statutes would enable us to more efficiently implement the overall wolf management program versus having to justify which pot of money is paying for what.

For example, there is commonly a situation where a wolf specialist visits with a landowner about a depredation incident that occurred, and then provides assistance or advice to that landowner about methods to prevent further depredation, while also coordinating with Wildlife Services about collaring and/or removing wolves in the pack thought to be responsible for depredation. Do they charge their time to collaring? To lethal control? To education and outreach? In reality, it is all three, but under current statute, if they are charging against the wolf management account, they would have to spend time differentiating between collaring or lethal control, and track their time accordingly. Passage of HB 189 would preclude the need for this.

For reference, management is defined in 87-5-102 as “the collection and application of biological information for the purposes of conserving populations of wildlife consistent with other uses of land and habitat. The term includes the entire range of activities that constitute a modern scientific resource program, including but not limited to research, census, law enforcement, habitat improvement, control, and education. The term also includes the periodic protection of species or populations, as well as regulated taking.”

This definition functionally describes Montana’s wolf management program. Our primary emphasis is population management, collaring for both management and depredation purposes, coordination with Wildlife Services on depredation responses, and coordination with landowners to reduce conflicts.

In reality, this bill won’t change the way the wolf program is currently delivered, but it will make that delivery more efficient, and does clarify that education is an important part of overall wolf management. For this reason, we urge a Do Pass on SB 189. We will be available for questions.